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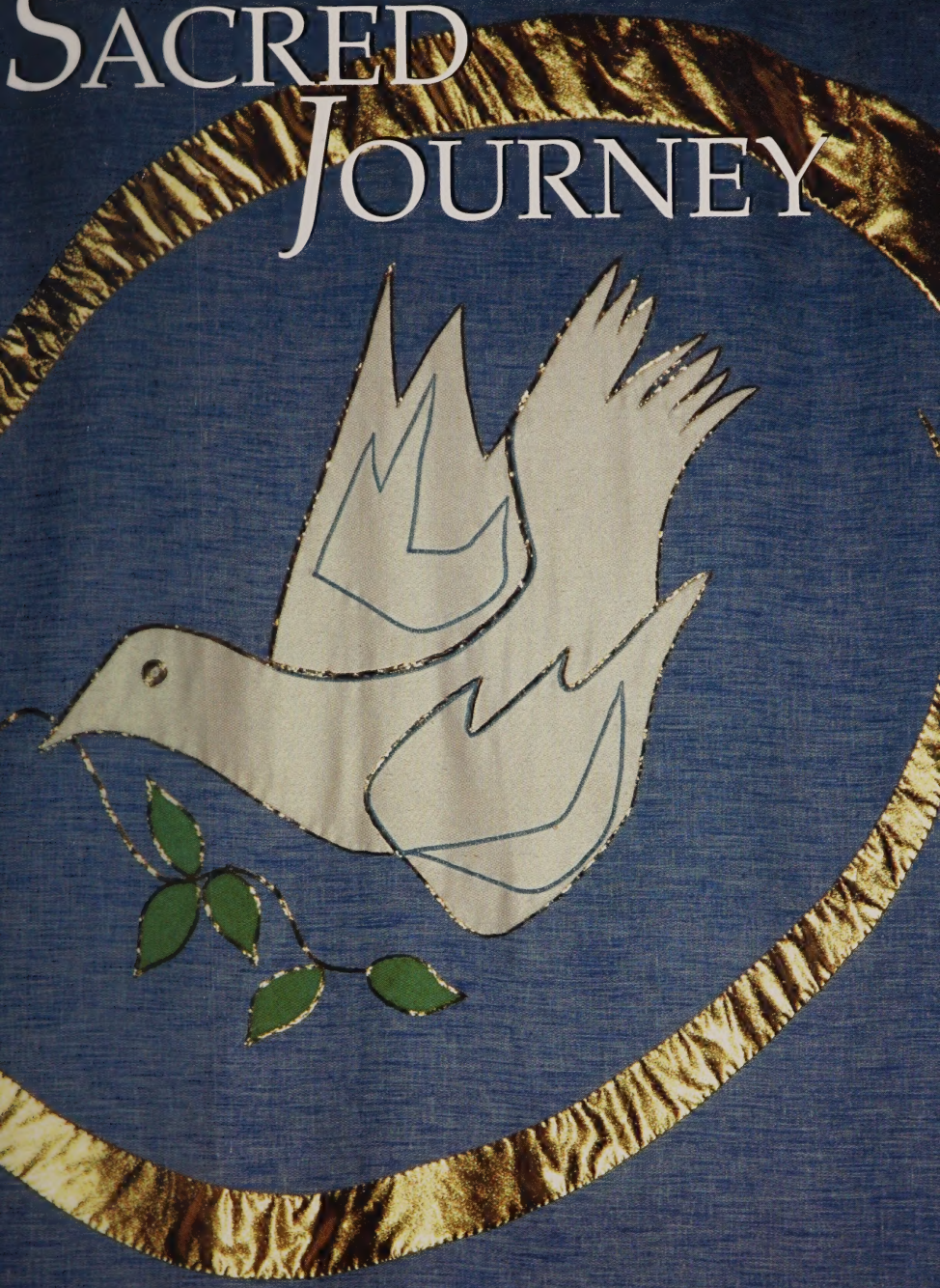

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Archive Copy

Cover photo: Dove of Peace, a banner by John A. Sully, hanging in the Princeton University Chapel, after a design by the great English embroiderer and designer, Beryl Dean. Photo by Louise Hutner.

Peace: "One Radical Solution"

"We will pursue the course of peace with determination and fortitude. We will not let up. We will not give in. Peace will triumph over all its enemies, because the alternative is grimmer for us all."
~ The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

As we close another year here at *SACRED JOURNEY,* we offer you words about peace, with articles and poems reflecting on the peace that needs to begin within each of us and then spread beyond.

The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, described peace as "the one radical means for sanctifying human life." Sadly, it seems that the progress and hope he described in that speech have eroded. Please read these words from his speech, a plea to all people, but especially to national leaders, to put peace and the sanctity of human life above all else.

"A child is born in an utterly undemocratic way. He cannot choose his father and mother. He cannot pick his sex or color, his religion, nationality or homeland. Whether he is born in a manor or a manger, whether he lives under a despotic or democratic regime is not his choice. From the moment he comes, closefisted, into the world, his fate—to a large extent—is decided by his nation's leaders. It is they who will decide

whether he lives in comfort or in despair, in security or in fear.

"The leaders of nations must provide their peoples with the conditions . . . which enable them to enjoy life: freedom of speech and movement; food and shelter; and most important of all: life itself. A man cannot enjoy his rights if he is not alive. And so every country must protect and preserve the key element in its national ethos: the lives of its citizens.

"Only to defend those lives can we call upon our citizens to enlist in the army. And to defend the lives of our citizens serving in the army, we invest huge sums in planes and tanks, and other means. Yet despite it all, we fail to protect the lives of our citizens and soldiers. Military cemeteries in every corner of the world are silent testimony to the failure of national leaders to sanctify human life.

"There is only one radical means for sanctifying human life. The one radical solution is a real peace."

Less than a year later, on November 4, 1995 in Tel Aviv, a peace rally was held under the slogan "Yes to Peace, No to Violence." Prime Minister Rabin said then: "Without partners for peace, there can be no peace. . ."

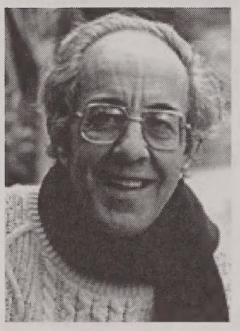
Ninety minutes after Rabin finished this speech, he was assassinated by a Jewish right-wing extremist.

Let us pray that the leaders of all nations heed the wisdom of peacemakers like Yitzhak Rabin .

May you cultivate peace in your heart now and spread it far and wide.

"The man who lives from God's breath can recognize with joy that the same breath sinks into the lungs of his fellowman, and that they are both drawing from the same source. At this mutual realization, the fear of another disappears, a smile comes to the lips, the weapons fall, and one hand reaches out for the other." *~ Henri Nouwen*

OUR FEATURE
Praying With Open Hands
Henri Nouwen



Henri J.M. Nouwen was a Catholic priest, teacher, spiritual guide, and one of the most popular spiritual writers of our time. Born in Holland, he was trained as a psychologist and a theologian. Nouwen taught at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard and was involved in the civil rights, peace, and social justice movements of the sixties and seventies. He looked for ways to help people deepen their spiritual foundations and cultivate community. He spent the last ten years of his life ministering to physically and mentally challenged men and women at L'Arche Daybreak community in Toronto, Canada. He died in 1996. His forty books include With Open Hands, Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life, *and* Can You Drink the Cup? *For more information on Nouwen's life and legacy see the web site of the Henri Nouwen Society at www.henrinouwen.org.*

Our former editor Rebecca Laird, together with her husband Michael Christensen, were longtime friends of Nouwen, and Rebecca interviewed him for the December 1996 issue of SACRED JOURNEY. *That interview, titled "Parting Words," was conducted in August 1996 just weeks before he died and was the last interview he gave. It has been reprinted in several books, including our own 24-page booklet,* SACRED

JOURNEY CLASSICS: Parting Words, A Conversation with Henri Nouwen, *(available by calling us or visiting our web site at www.sacredjourney.org/gifts.htm.) Rebecca and Michael are co-editors of two recent Nouwen books based on his writings:* The Heart of Henri Nouwen: His Words of Blessing *(Crossroads 2003), and* Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith: Spiritual Direction with Henri Nouwen, *forthcoming from HarperCollins in the spring of 2006.*

With Open Hands (1972) *was Nouwen's first book on prayer and the spiritual life (two previous books dealt with ministry and pastoral psychology). With short passages and intriguing photographs, this book is Nouwen's invitation to open our hands and hearts to God and to one another. His insights retain their original freshness and contain many of the themes developed in his later books. Ave Maria Press will release a thirtieth anniversary edition of* With Open Hands *in April 2006, with a foreword by Sue Monk Kidd and new photographs. We offer you the following excerpts as a sampling from the original edition.*

Praying is no easy matter. It demands a relationship in which you allow the other to enter into the very center of your person, allow him to speak there, allow him to touch the sensitive core of your being, and allow him to see so much that you would rather leave in darkness. And when do you really want to do that? Perhaps you would let the other come across the threshold to say something, to touch something, but to let him into that place where your life gets its form, that is dangerous and calls for defense.

The resistance to praying is like the resistance of tightly clenched fists. This image shows the tension, the desire to cling tightly to yourself, a greediness which betrays fear. The story about an old woman brought to a psychiatric

center exemplifies this attitude. She was wild, swinging at everything in sight, and scaring everyone so much that the doctors had to take everything away from her. But there was one small coin which she gripped in her fist and would not give up. It was as though she would lose her very self along with the coin. If they deprived her of that last possession, she would have nothing more, and be nothing more. That was her fear.

The man invited to pray is asked to open his tightly clenched fists and to give up his last coin. But who wants to do that? A first prayer, therefore, is often a painful prayer, because you discover you don't want to let go. You hold fast to what is familiar, even if you aren't proud of it. You find yourself saying: "That's just how it is with me. I would like it to be different, but it can't be now. That's just the way it is, and that's the way I'll have to leave it." Once you talk like that you've already given up the hope that your life might be otherwise, you've already let the hope for a new life float by. Since you wouldn't dare to put a question mark behind a bit of your own experience with all its attachments, you have wrapped yourself up in the destiny of facts. You feel it is safer to cling to a sorry past than to trust in a new future. So you fill your hands with small clammy coins which you don't want to surrender.

You still feel bitter because that girl wasn't grateful for something you gave her; you still feel jealous of the fellow who is better paid than you are, you still want revenge on someone who doesn't respect you, you are still disappointed that you've received no letter, still angry because she didn't smile when you walked by. You live through it, you live along with it as though it didn't really bother you . . . until the moment that you want to pray. Then everything returns: the bitterness, the hate, the

jealousy, the disappointment and the desire for revenge. But these feelings are not just there, you clutch them in your hands as if they were treasures you didn't want to part with. You sit rummaging in all that old sourness as if you couldn't do without it, as if in giving it up, you would lose your very self.

Detachment is often understood as letting loose of what is attractive. But it can also mean being attached to what is repulsive. You can become attached to your own hate. As long as you look for retaliation, you are riveted to your own past. Sometimes it appears as though you would lose yourself along with your revenge and hate—so you stand there with balled-up fists, closed to the other who wants to heal.

When you want to pray, then, the first question is: How do I open my closed hands? Certainly not by violence. Nor by a compulsive decision. Perhaps you can find a way to prayer in the words of the angel to the frightened shepherds, the same words the risen Lord spoke to his disciples: "Don't be afraid." Don't be afraid of him who wants to enter that space where you live, or to let him see what you are clinging to so anxiously. Don't be afraid to show the clammy coin which will buy so little anyway. Don't be afraid to offer your hate, bitterness, disappointment to him who reveals himself as love. Even if you know you have little to show, don't be afraid to let it be seen. You keep catching yourself wanting to deceive the other by putting on a semblance of beauty, by holding back everything dirty and spoiled, by clearing a little path that looks very proper. But that is compulsive, forced and artificial; it exhausts you and turns prayer into torment.

When you dare to let go and surrender one of those many fears, your hand relaxes and your palms spread out

Robert F. Campbell

in a gesture of receiving. You must have patience, of course, before your hands are completely open and their muscles relaxed.

You can never fully achieve such an attitude, for behind each fist another one is hiding, and sometimes the process seems endless. Much has happened in your life to make all these fists. . . At any hour of the day or night you might clench again for fear.

Someone will tell you, "You have to be able to forgive yourself." But that isn't possible. What is possible is to open your hands without fear, so the other can blow your sins away. For perhaps it isn't clammy coins, but just a light dust which a soft breeze will whirl away, leaving only a grin or a chuckle behind. Then you feel a bit of new freedom, and praying becomes a joy, a spontaneous reaction to the world, and the people around you. Praying becomes effortless, inspired and lively, or peaceful and quiet. Then you recognize the festive and the modest as moments of prayer. You begin to suspect that to pray is to live.

The man who lives from God's breath can recognize with joy that the same breath sinks into the lungs of his fellowman, and that they are both drawing from the same source. At this mutual realization, the fear of another disappears, a smile comes to the lips, the weapons fall, and one hand reaches out for the other. He who recognizes the breath of God in another can truly let another enter his life, too, and can receive the gifts which are given to him. In this way it is possible to allow another the joy of giving something.

The difficulty this presents in our time comes out in this confession of a contemporary man: "To accept something gives me the feeling of dependence. This is something I'm generally

not used to. I manage my own affairs and I'm glad I can. Whenever I receive something, I don't know exactly how to handle it. It's as though I am no longer the center of my own life and it gets a little uncomfortable. Actually that's a silly thing to say, for I'm not letting someone else have what I myself like to have. I don't let him have the joy of giving."

But when you notice that someone accepts you, you want to give everything in return and you discover that you have much more to give than you thought.

Compassion is daring to acknowledge our mutual destiny so that we might move forward all together into the land which God is showing us. Compassion also means sharing another's joy which can be just as difficult as suffering with him. To give another the chance to be completely happy and to let his joy blossom to the full. Often you can do nothing more than present a bleached smile and say with some effort, "That's really good for you," or "I'm glad to see you made it."

But this compassion is more than a shared slavery with the same fear and same sighs of relief, and more than a shared joy. For if your compassion is born of prayer, it is born of your meeting with God who is also the God of your fellowman. At the moment when you grant that God is God who wants to be your God, and when you give him access to yourself, you realize that a new way has been opened for the man who is beside you. He too has no reason to fear, he too does not have to hide behind a hedge, he too needs no weapons to be a man. The garden which has been unattended for so long is also meant for him.

Conversion to God, therefore, means a simultaneous conversion to the other persons who live with you on this earth. The farmer, the worker, the student, the prisoner,

the sick, the black man, the white man, the weak, the strong, the oppressed and the oppressor, the patient and the one who heals, the tortured and the torturer, the boss and the flunky, not only are they people like you, but they are also called to make themselves heard and to give God a chance to be the God of all.

Thus compassion removes all pretensions, just as it removes false modesty. It invites you to understand everything, to see yourself in the light of God and to joyfully tell everyone you meet that there is no reason to fear; the land is free to be cultivated and to yield a rich harvest.

It is not so simple, however. Risks are involved. For compassion means to lay a bridge over to the other without knowing whether he wants to be reached. Your fellowman might be so embittered that he doesn't expect anything from you. Then your compassion stirs up enmity and it is difficult not to become sour yourself and say, "You see what I told you, it doesn't work anyhow." And yet, compassion is possible when it has roots in prayer. For in prayer you are not based on your own strength, not on the good will of another, but only on trust in God. That is why prayer is primarily a calling to find your own place in this world and to live in that place. There it is that you not only discover that you exist, but you meet people next to you, who with you cultivate and develop the new world.

When your life is more and more becoming a prayer, you notice that you are always busy converting yourself and gaining an ever-deeper understanding of your fellowman. You notice, too, that prayer is the pulse of the world you live in. If you are really praying, you can't help but have critical questions about the great problems the world is grappling with, and you can't get rid of the idea

that a conversion is not only necessary for yourself and your neighbor, but for the entire human community. This conversion of the world means a "turning-around," a revolution, which can lead to renewal.

To pray means to open your hands before God. It means slowly relaxing the tension which squeezes your hands together and accepting your existence with an increasing readiness, not as a possession to defend, but as a gift to receive. Above all, therefore, prayer is a way of life which allows you to find a stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God's promises, and find hope for yourself, your fellowman and the whole community in which you live. In prayer, you encounter God in the soft breeze, in the distress and joy of your neighbor and in the loneliness of your own heart.

A life in prayer is a life with open hands where you are not ashamed of your weakness but realize that it is more perfect for a man to be led by the other than to seek to hold everything in his own hands.

Only within this kind of life does a spoken prayer make sense. A prayer in church, at table or in school is only a witness to what we want to make of our entire lives. Such a prayer only recalls to mind that praying is living and it invites you to make this an ever-greater reality. Thus there are as many ways to pray as there are moments in life. . .

In all these moments, you gradually make your life more a prayer and you open your hands to be led by God even to where you would rather not go.

Excerpted from With Open Hands, *by Henri J.M. Nouwen. © 1972, 1995 by Ave Maria Press. Used with permission. Copies available at 800-282-1865 or online at www.avemariapress.com.*

Chapel at Taos Pueblo, by Robert F. Campbell

ILLUMINATIONS

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

~ *Micah, 4:3*

It is in solitude that compassionate solidarity grows. In solitude we realize that nothing human is alien to us, that the roots of all conflict, war, injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, and envy are deeply anchored in our own heart.

~ *Henri Nouwen*

Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

~ *Ecclesiastes 9:18*

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each man's life a sorrow and a suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

~ *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Wisdom outweighs strength.

~ *African proverb*

A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labor of others, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am receiving.

~ *Albert Einstein*

Put down your opinion, your condition, your situation, then you will not be stuck. Always stay open. . . Zen means put everything down. Then you can control any situation or condition.

~ *Seung Sahn*

A person's true wealth is the good he or she does in the world.

~ *Muhammad*

Do not feed your spirit on anything apart from God. Cast away all cares and let peace and reconciliation fill your heart.

~ St. John of the Cross

The first step toward peace is to listen to and understand yourself and your fellow citizens. Otherwise, how can you listen to and understand the suffering of other people?... All people suffer from the same things: social injustice, discrimination, fear, and fanaticism.

~ *Thich Nhat Hanh*

I forgive all beings, I ask forgiveness from all beings, I make friends with all beings, I have no enemies.

~ *Jain text, Pratikraman Sutra*

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

~ *Mother Teresa*

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

~ *Kahlil Gibran*

Aisha

Bridget Haase, O.S.U.

In the cool of the desert dawn, I would make my way down to the dry river bed near our compound. It was a quiet spot where I could renew my inner energy and gather my thoughts before facing the demands of the day. There, standing before the expanse of sand, I would try to pray but would always become quite restless. My thoughts would turn to water. Dreams of turning on a faucet and putting my mouth underneath would captivate me. I would imagine tall glasses of ice water with a slice of lemon. Then, the taste of a sand-filled harsh early morning wind would break my thoughts and bring me back to the reality of drought.

It was on a morning such as this that I first noticed the Muslim woman. With regal bearing, farther down the bank, she stood in rapt attention. I watched her as she stood immobile for long stretches of time. I tried to imagine her musings and wondered how long she had been in the refugee camp.

Sister Bridget Haase, O.S.U. is the spirituality coordinator at The Boston Home, Dorchester, MA, a long-term facility for younger adults living with multiple sclerosis. She has co-authored ENKINDLED: Holy Spirit, Holy Gifts, *and is the author of* WELL SAID: Children's Words of Wisdom.

One day, she brought an earthen jug and three children with her. I watched her let go of the grasp of her two children's hands, take the jug from her head and put it on the ground. Then, she removed the infant from her back. With grace and dignity, she lifted the child to the heavens. Then I knew. She was, indeed, asking for water, not for herself but for her children.

She returned the infant to her back and then knelt down. Slowly, she began digging little holes in the sand. This went on for some time and then, much to my surprise, she vigorously began scooping with a small, metal, spoon-shaped instrument. I realized she had found a water hole. Reverently, carefully, she was placing water in her jug. Little by little, she continued, bent low, as though in adoration.

Once in a while, she would dab a little water on the lips of her children and once, only once, did she dab her own. The right to water had become sheer gift.

I thought of my long showers, running water while brushing my teeth, washing less than full loads of laundry. How much water had I wasted over the years?

I left her there with her children and Allah. But I carried her in my heart for several weeks.

Then, one day, we met. I was canvassing the camp, going tent-to-tent, looking for children who were malnourished. Often parents had given up hope for the weakest child, thinking that the stronger had more right to eat. They needed encouragement to bring even the sickest child to the feeding center.

Unknowingly, I passed Aisha's tent. She looked at me — and I recognized the woman at the river bed. We exchanged polite Arabic greetings and then she spoke one word: "Aisha."

"Bridget," I replied.

Our smiles conveyed that now we each knew the other's name and because of that, were bonded in relationship.

Our friendship did, indeed, grow. Each day we would meet as Aisha brought her children to the feeding center for hot milk and high energy biscuits. We would smile at each other and gesture profusely in our attempts to converse. Little by little, she taught me a few simple Arabic words and learned a few in English.

The months passed. Before long, my year in the refugee camp was coming to an end. I had mixed emotions. I knew I was going home to food, medicine and water. I also realized that the children and families I had grown to love would continue to bake under the desert sun, would walk miles to find water holes, would be hungry every day, and die of malnourishment and disease.

On the day of my departure, I returned to the feeding center for the last time. One-by-one, I said goodbye through tears of frustration, guilt and love. A sense of powerlessness gripped me as I surrendered the lives of these children to God.

With a heavy heart, I realized that I had not seen Aisha. Lost in this sad thought, I began my trek across the desert to gather my belongings for the trip to Khartoum. Suddenly, the sound of my name, heavily accented, reached my ears.

"Bridge, Bridge," a woman was calling.

I turned and saw Aisha, the regal woman at the river bed now racing barefoot across the hot sand. She had two children in tow and her baby, now strong and nourished, on her back. She threw out her arms in the

nurturing embrace of friendship.

Then she took my hand, pressing a Sudanese pound into it.

Immediately, I recalled trying to change British pounds to Sudanese in London. The bank teller merely smirked and said, "Sorry. We don't deal in play money."

That Sudanese pound was Aisha's payment for a twelve-hour-day's work in the desert sun. Worth about fifteen cents in exchange, it was priceless to Aisha. It was all she had.

In Arabic, I told her "no," and returned the pound.

She resisted. Although I could not understand her Arabic, her facial expressions and gestures towards the heavens conveyed her insistence and determination.

"Yes, Bridge. You take it. Whether I give it to you or give it to Allah, it is all the same. All the same, Bridge."

At that moment, I realized that Aisha had discovered wisdom in her life, so well lived. She saw no distinction between what we do to God and what we do to and for others. It is all the same.

I opened my hand to receive both the pound and Aisha's selfless and generous gift of love and farewell. Into this outstretched hand she gently and reverently placed the Sudanese money.

As I took it, I realized that as my call to Sudan began, so my stay there ended—with outstretched hands.

Christmas and the Single Bulb Theory

Connon Barclay

On any personality test, I would have to rate "average" in temperament, "high" in sociability, and "very low" in willingness to conform.

These ratings, of course, can be subject to change, willy-nilly, in the suburbs, largely because of the suburban tendency to fast turnover and the ever-changing interrelationships of the "dramatis personae. . ."

But our little suburban neighborhood of fifty or so homes was quite stable for almost five years. Most of the soiled linens had been verbally washed in public, and the neighborhood actors were well known in their roles.

I was something of a star. A contrary star. My role was "the nonconformist." It wasn't a constant nonconformity. In fact, the last time it showed up was just before Christmas last year.

Ordinarily, I go along. Each spring I invest as much time and money on my lawn—for the neighborhood's general appearance—as anyone else. Every Tuesday is lawn mowing day, regardless of weather or health.

Connon Barclay is a freelance writer who lives in Zeeland, Michigan with his wife and their golden retriever who is their editor-in-chief. Barclay's work has appeared in over 100 publications.

Many an evening in summer our family barbecues dinner in our backyard, no matter what direction the wind. At times we even spend uncomfortably hot evenings in uncomfortable lawn chairs, chatting about the lovely weather while swatting away the bugs.

Come fall, all fifty homes in the neighborhood are prepared for winter on the same weekend (which always conflicts with what turns out to be the last good weekend for golf, which everyone plays.)

But then came the approach of last Christmas. The time of year when everyone goes out and decorates home and yard with enough incandescence to make the electric company's books fairly bulge with revenue.

But I was the holdout. The loner. The only neighbor who steadfastly refused to put up outdoor Christmas decorations.

The Christmas spirit, to me, is not something that is measured by the number of bushes covered with light bulbs, nor by the number of reindeer that suddenly appear on the roof, noses blinking, nor by the size of the Kris Kringle that stands, nodding, by the front door.

A simple wreath on the door had been our family custom. But last year, our neighbors—abetted by my wife, I might add—began working on me right after Thanksgiving. They wanted me to conform. Their effort was as methodical and planned and orchestrated as any political campaign. And as devious, at times.

The weekly Saturday morning browse at the hardware store became a period of intense peer pressure. I'd run into a neighbor there and he'd say, "What kind of bulbs do you think would be best?" or "Getting your lights early this year?" It seemed they drew lots to see who'd lie in wait for me at the

store. "Great sale on decorations today," they'd say. One even slipped a string of lights in among my other purchases once; I was saved only by the clerk, who said, "These certainly can't be yours."

At neighborhood social gatherings, they came at me. I was battle-worn by December 10 from discussions of holiday decorations and talk about "how nice the neighborhood would look, if only you'd . . ."

Christmas neared and the neighbors' lights began to go up. Our address continued to be dark and bare.

Finally, embarrassment led me to retaliate. I drove to a nearby community, wearing dark glasses, and bought a small string of lights. The smallest they had.

I went home and carefully awaited the judicious moment when it was dark and no one was watching. I went outside and threw the light cord onto a bush. I put one blue bulb near the top of the shrub and then threw the rest of the bulbs away.

Back inside, I turned on the light. There, amid the crashing waves of a sea of winking, blinking, shining multi-colored incandescence, stood our house with one lone, blue bulb out front, burning softly and steadily. The joy of it all made me laugh like Santa.

The laughter continued even when my wife, unsure whether I was finished with our "display" or just starting a more extensive one, stared out the window and asked, "Are you serious ?"

A few nights passed. News of my blue bulb got around the neighborhood. My wife, aware now that I was indeed finished, called a few friends and urged them to drive by to see it. They called others. As Christmas neared, the blue bulb gained notoriety.

One family called and said they had visitors from

out of town and asked me to turn the bulb on early so they could drive by and show it to them. The visitors wanted proof. Some children on school buses asked me to turn it on for them as they passed.

Now, one blue bulb could never compare with the fancy decorations surrounding us. But one Friday night, I heard police sirens outside. Looking out the window, I saw a parade out there. Two neighborhood ladies, dressed up as police officers, were directing traffic. Everyone in the neighborhood was driving slowly by, pausing a few moments in front of our house to look at the bulb, and then being waved on. Every one of them honked as he passed the bulb.

I went outside and was besieged by neighbors. I was a celebrity. They had caught the spirit—a spirit brewed, it turned out, partly by my wife. She had been in on planning the "impromptu" parade.

Some neighbors had cameras and they made me pose with the light. Flashbulbs popped, shutters clicked. We shared shouts of laughter and fun. It was the Christmas spirit, indeed.

Christmas in the suburbs can sometimes be very lonely. Many of us lived there after having been transferred by our companies away from hometowns and relatives.

Last Christmas was joyous. Our neighborhood was brought together by that one blue bulb.

Maybe this year I'll make it a blinking bulb.

Still

Mary Jo Grant

In the still sanctuary
Spirit hovers
Time pauses
Mystery beckons

God's light pours through ancient symbols
shining Holy stories into our souls

Dancing angels carry prayers to the altar
crosses gleam in their reflected light

Walls hum with a thousand hymns
Hallowed emptiness whispers
promises of new beginnings
expressions of mourning
exchanges of solemn vows
scripture
sermon
story

Sacred Hour
Sacred Space
Sacred Presence
Sanctuary

Every Moment Shines

Shawn Nevins

A crow glides in silently:
like a suspicion of truth,
like the momentary fall of winter light
through a blind
that illuminates a familiar room
—a life—
in mystery,
in significance.
The crow rises up,
cawing, escaping our attention,
as clouds obscure the vision.
Still . . .
Still there lingers
the transparency of light, sound, and self
in which every moment shines.

Mary Jo Grant has a Ph.D. in archetypal psychology and practices psychospiritual counseling. She is married to an attorney and is the mother of two and the grandmother of four grandsons.

Shawn Nevins is a program facilitator with the Louisville, KY parks system, where he is fortunate to be outdoors on many a fine day. His poems have appeared in the Louisville Review, TAT Forum, Lilliput Review, and Poetry Chaikhana.

Tibetan Prayer Flags

Bobbi Dykema Katsanis

small bright squares of fragile fabric
tacked one beside the other
in your doorway.
let wind and rain and sun do what they will;
they'll take your prayers to heaven
with each tattered, fraying thread.
so delicate and hopeful,
so naïve,
what can a flag do?
when the world seeks nothing more
than killing hate.

beyond your doorway
is a range of mountains
tacked one beside the other,
snow-squared shoulders,
solid as time.
they are unmoved
through work and war and weather.

outside your doorway,
halfway down the street,
on a bright playground,
children singing ring around the rosy,
tacked one beside the other,
holding hands,
faces bright with laughter.

When the time comes to choose,
I will stand with children,
and with mountains,
and with bright and tattered flags.

Timeless

Corrine De Winter

Brighter than the sun
is the promise of hope,
the birth of faith,
and the timeless
way we are loved
by Him.
At this season
let us be mindful of each other.
Let us know
that we are shelter
for one another.
We call on angels
and the light from above
to show us mercy,
but we know it is on earth,
here and now,
that our own love and compassion
can overcome every darkness.

Bobbi Dykema Katsanis grew up on a North Dakota farm, seeing angels in the clouds. She is working on her doctorate in Art and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. She writes because she loves the world too much to keep silent.

Corrine De Winter is the author of seven collections of verse. Her work has appeared in hundreds of journals and books including Comfort Prayers; Bless the Day; *and* The Language of Prayer. *She lives in western Massachusetts.*

Open Secrets

Rami M. Shapiro

Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro is an award-winning poet and essayist, whose liturgical writings are used in the prayer services of various denominations throughout North America. A congregational rabbi for 20 years, Shapiro founded and currently directs the One River Foundation, a not-for-profit educational organization promoting peace, interspirituality, and personal spiritual awakening through study, prayer, dialogue, and contemplative practice (see www.one-river.org). (SACRED JOURNEY interviewed Rabbi Shapiro in it's October 2002 issue.)

In the preface to his new book, Open Secrets: The Letters of Reb Yerachmiel ben Yisrael, *Rabbi Shapiro writes that a few years ago he felt he had lost touch with his soul and was unable to discern his true direction. He consulted his own rabbi, Reb Zalman Schachter Shalomi (the founding rabbi of the Jewish Renewal movement), who encouraged him to "create a Judaism for people who wish to learn from it as they do from Buddhism or Sufism . . . a Judaism for everyone, not just the Jews."*

Open Secrets *is the result. It is written as a series of imaginary letters from a nineteenth-century Russian rabbi to Shapiro's great-grandfather, and addresses such universal issues as "the nature of God, the purpose of*

Creation, and the reason for evil, suffering, and death." The following excerpt is from the second chapter, "Judaism," and discusses two major Jewish teachings: repairing the soul and repairing the world.

So, the question is "What is Judaism?". . .

I am certain you remember Hillel's famous reply to the Gentile who demanded he teach all of Torah while standing on one foot: " Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself. That is the whole of Torah. The rest is commentary. Now go and study it" (*Shabbat* 31a).

I am partial to these one foot Judaisms. They are simple, direct, and profound. And they leave us free to shape a Jewish life around principle rather than tradition. I am not opposed to tradition, God forbid, but I do not think it superior to principle. On the contrary, tradition is our record of the way our ancestors lived these principles in the past. We should see them as catalysts to our creativity and not as fixed forms to be imitated. This already is *treif* (not kosher, heretical) thinking on my part and I do not share this with my peers, but the teacher should not pretend before the student.

So here is my one foot Judaism: Judaism is the Jewish people's ancient and, God willing, ongoing effort to make *tikkun* and *teshuvah*. The rest is commentary. . . Of course now I must be clear as to what I mean by tikkun and teshuvah.

Tikkun means "repair." The great saint and kabbalist Isaac Luria, peace be upon him (1534-1572), was the first to use this term in a spiritual way. He believed that when God set out to create the world, God, being infinite, had to contract in order to make room for what

would become the finite world. God intended to pour the divine energy into specially constructed vessels that would form the foundation of creation. Yet God erred, so to speak, in the construction of these vessels and when the divine light entered them they shattered, spilling God, as it were, all over the cosmos.

These shattered fragments of God became trapped in *klippot* (shells) and these became embedded in the world you and I inhabit. Reb Luria taught that it was the task of the Jew to free these trapped sparks of God and return them to God by treating all things with utmost reverence and respect. Since the sparks were scattered across the world, the Jews would have to be scattered across the world. Our loss of Israel and our holy Temple in Jerusalem was not a punishment for our disobedience to God, but essential to God's plan. Who among us would have left the Holy Land of our own free will? No one! So God had the Romans push us out. What appeared to us as a loss of holiness, turns out in Luria's mind to be the way to holiness.

As you know, his understanding spoke to so many of our people. Luria's teaching replaced the horror of exile with the hope for redemption. And hope is the sap of life; without hope there is only lifeless form.

But I will tell you, Aaron Hershel, that I do not believe Reb Luria meant us to take this teaching literally. Or, if he did, I for one cannot do so. What Luria saw as a process happening in God and the world, I see as a process happening only in our minds.

Did God really shrink to make room for creation? No! God is infinite. Can the infinite become finite? Of course not; the infinite includes the finite. What happens is not that God shrinks, but that the *Neshamah*,

the ego, imagines a distant God to allow for the illusion of a separate self. And, once it has established itself as separate it goes about exploiting others in order to maintain its selfish delusion.

This, the Neshamah's rejection of the fundamental unity of all life in, with, and as God is to me the real understanding of the breaking of the vessels. The ego was meant to be a way of knowing God in the relative and finite world of seemingly separate things. But it came to identify so closely with this world that it could no longer place itself in the larger context of the unity of all things in God. Do not think I am saying ego is bad or that we should eliminate it. Ego is vital to our daily functioning in the world. We need a self to interact with the world. But we must not imagine that this self is anything more than a vessel of something far greater than it.

You and I and all living things are the vessels of God, the embodiment of *Elohut* (Godhead). In this we are one with God, yet we imagine ourselves to be separate from God and this creates in us the idea of brokenness. The brokenness of the world starts as a process in the mind, but it doesn't end there. We go about the world breaking it up into smaller and smaller segments, each often at war with the rest, without ever realizing we are warring with ourselves.

Tikkun is the process of putting things back together again.

There are two kinds of tikkun corresponding to the two kinds of brokenness we humans imagine. The first is called *tikkun hanefesh*, repairing the soul. The second is called *tikkun haolam*, repairing the world. Both must occur if we are to set things right, and neither takes precedence over the other. Indeed they are two ends of the same rope.

We make tikkun hanefesh when we end the delusion of separateness that keeps us feeling alienated from God and creation. The truth is that God is creation. There are not two realities, the divine and the natural. If this were so, God would not be infinite. God's infinity includes and transcends the finite world. There is only one reality that manifests in different ways. It is all God. Tikkun hanefesh is awakening to the fact that you and I and all things are one in, with, and as God.

We make tikkun haolam when we engage the world with justice and compassion, what I call godliness. Tikkun haolam is repairing the damage we do to life when we engage it unjustly and cruelly. Tikkun haolam is ending the violence that comes with seeking to control others, repairing the rifts between people, and between people and nature, and treating each other and all life with the utmost respect and care.

Tikkun hanefesh and tikkun haolam are two sides of the same coin. You cannot do one without doing the other: to end the divisions and violence around you, you must also end the divisions and violence within you. This is what Hillel meant when he said "If I am not for myself who will be for me?" This is tikkun hanefesh. "But if I am only for myself, what am I? This is tikkun haolam. "And if not now, when?" (*Pirke Avot*) Tikkun of either type can be done only in the present. The past and future are beyond our reach. If you repair your world and your soul you must do so by entering fully into the present moment.

How do you do this? Through the practice of *teshuvah*. So many people now use the word to refer to a return to *Halachah* (Jewish law) and traditional ways of Jewish living but I use it differently.

Teshuvah means returning to God and godliness. When your mind is caught up in the delusion of separateness it is distracted from the present. The deluded mind dwells on the past or imagines the future, but is never at home in the present. Why? Because the delusion of separateness cannot be maintained in the present. Since separation is a delusion of the mind, it is imagined in the mind, and the mind cannot imagine in the present. Imagination is of the past or the future, never the present. We cannot imagine the here and now, we can only engage it. Teshuvah is returning the mind to the present, to God, for God is the eternal present; tikkun returns us to godliness, engaging each moment with the utmost respect and care. If you are interested we can discuss just how this is done, but in any case this is what I think Judaism is: tikkun and teshuvah.

I can almost hear your objections! What about God, what about Torah, What about Israel, What about *Shabbat* and *Yontif* (the Sabbath and Holy Days?) I am not ignoring these, and if you ask, I will be happy to explore them with you. But we are talking about a one foot Judaism. Hillel, too, did not mention Shabbat. He said all the rest is commentary; now go and study it. I will say no less: Judaism is returning to God and godliness. All the rest is commentary. Come, let us study it.

B'Shalom

From OPEN SECRETS: The Letters of Reb Yerachmiel ben Yisrael, *by Rami M. Shapiro. © 2004. Used with permission from Monkfish Book Publishing Co., 27 Lamoree Rd., Rhinebeck, NY 12572. www.monkfishpublishing.com.*

Verendrie Provincial Park, by Colin Ahearn

Bodhisattva Vows Remembered

Pam Greenslate

On Thanksgiving Day 2001 my husband, Roger, died suddenly and unexpectedly. He died of a cerebral aneurysm and his death was instantaneous. Roger was a beautiful soul—a wonderful husband, father, and a gentle giant of a man. His death, like the felling of a great oak tree, left an empty space against the sky for our two sons and me.

Upon finding his body, calling 911, and dealing with the rush of emergency personnel into our home, I had a picture flash through my mind. I saw Roger starting to stand up, slumping over into death, and then stepping out of his physical body. He looked around for a moment—a little confused—and then said, "Wow" and stepped away into his journey. As the police and EMTs bustled around shouting orders—moving me and my sons aside—attempting CPR on an already dead body—I heard Roger laugh and say, "Let it go—I am gone".

All of this happened in a blur, but I knew that he was telling me then to let go and move on. Many events

Pam Greenslate is the founder and director of CASA Center for Therapeutic Services in Peoria, Illinois. She is a therapist who specializes in work with the unconscious process through the use of dreams, metaphors, and archetypes. She is a Reiki Master/Teacher, a writer, and a workshop leader.

took place in the days and weeks following his death—events that were messages from him to me—messages to let me know that he was still near and that we were still connected.

One such event took place in the early spring of 2002. I was spending the day with an old friend whom I had not seen since Roger's death. Our talk rambled to our lives, families, friends—the general catching up two friends do after not being together for a time. In the afternoon my friend suddenly said, "You know, I have always thought that you and Roger were bodhisattvas." I asked her to explain the term and she said that a bodhisattva was someone who took a vow to remain until all sentient beings are free. Over the months since Roger's death I had felt that I wanted this to be my last physical incarnation, as I did not want to deal with this deep pain of loss again.

My friend continued, saying the Dalai Lama had recently published a book that had the bodhisattva vows printed in it. She could not recall the name of the book, but knew that it was a fairly recent release. I finally said (to draw this conversation to an end), "Well, if I am to read the book, I imagine it will cross my path."

Over the next two or three weeks my friend's comment stayed in the back of my mind. I would push her words away, only to find myself thinking about them time and again. Eventually, to settle this nagging in my head, I decided to look up a listing of books by the Dalai Lama and see if I could figure out which book she was describing.

I went online and, as I opened the web page with all of his books listed, the cover of one book stood out. It was *An Open Heart* published in 2001. The book cover

stood out because it had been one of the last gifts Roger had given to me.

In the early fall, before he died, he came home one afternoon with this book. He told me he had been in the bookstore where there was a display table with books written by the Dalai Lama. He said he just "knew" he was to buy this book and give it to me.

I thanked him. I looked forward to reading it, but at that moment I was reading another book, and I suggested he might read it first. He declined saying, "This may sound silly, but I am to give this book to you. There is something in there you need to know." I put the book down, to read later.

I picked up *An Open Heart* in mid-October and began reading it. It is a book that I read in short segments—allowing time to absorb the beautiful wisdom of the Dalai Lama's words. I was about midway through the book the day Roger died. I put it away and forgot that I had it.

Sitting at my computer, looking at the picture of the book's cover, I was amazed. I decided not to pursue this further, and I told myself that I had put the book away, did not remember where it was, and did not have time to go searching for it. So I left it like that for another few weeks.

One Sunday morning in mid-May I awoke from a dream with the Dalai Lama. I sat up in bed. It was raining and the day was gray and overcast. Without thought, I got out of bed, walked into my meditation room, reached out towards the books on my bookshelf, and when I pulled my hand back, it was holding *An Open Heart* with the Dalai Lama smiling at me from the cover.

I took the book back to my bedroom, crawled onto the middle of my bed, and held it in my hands. It was as if Roger were right there with me—I could feel his gentle hand on my shoulder, his breath on my neck, as he urged me to open the book. With shaking hands I opened the book and it fell open to the final chapter and to the bodhisattva vows.

The writing on the pages blurred as tears flowed from my eyes, falling onto my hands that held the book, and onto the pages of the book. I sat crying for a long time, and then finally picked up the book to read the vows. I understood as I read these words that taking the vows in this lifetime would return me to the vows I have taken in previous lifetimes.

In the chapter on the bodhisattva vows the Dalai Lama suggests repeating them in the presence of others. And I knew my next task would be to take these vows in a sacred manner with another to witness this.

My good friend and teacher from India, Swami Dharmakeerti Saraswathi, would be arriving in late June. She was coming to stay with me for 10 days while she taught yoga and meditation classes throughout the area. I decided I would ask her to be witness to my taking the vows.

As the time drew near for her to arrive I began to question my decision. I told myself that it was my ego asking her to hear the vows and I should not bother her with this request. I went back and forth in my mind as to what to do, and finally decided that if this were to be, I would receive a sign. I told myself, "If there is no sign then it is not to be and I will let it go."

Dharmakeerti arrived, and on her second night with me she walked into the living room with gifts. She

handed me a small, beaded, red bag, and told me to look inside. I opened the bag and withdrew a tiny statue of the Sleeping Buddha. I began to cry, and Dharmakeerti asked what was wrong.

I told her the story of Roger's gift of the Dalai Lama's book to me, my friend's words, and my eventually finding the book and reading the bodhisattva vows. I asked if she would be witness to my taking these vows, and she agreed. On the last day of her visit with me we went to the hill where I had scattered Roger's ashes and in her presence I repeated these vows:

With a wish to free all beings
I shall always go for refuge
To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
Until I reach full enlightenment.

Enthused by wisdom and compassion
Today in the Buddha's presence
I generate the Mind Wishing Full Awakening
For the benefit of all sentient beings.

As long as space remains,
As long as sentient beings remain,
Until then, may I too remain
And dispel the miseries of the world.

Robert F. Campbell

PRAYERS

MAY WE BECOME CANDLES

Father Virgil Cordano, O.F.M.

May our task in life be to enlighten
an otherwise darkened and threatened world.
May we be the light that enlightens and also warms
an otherwise cold and unloved earth.
May we in family, religious groups, and business,
dispel hatred with love, heal injury with pardon,
conquer doubt through faith, fight off despair with hope,
bring joy to saddened lives,
and eliminate poverty by sharing our abundance.
May there be reconciliation wherever
there is alienation.
May there be inner freedom where there is enslaving addiction.
May there be support where there is neglect.
May we offer acceptance where there is rejection.
May we leave the darkness of just existing
to come to responsible living.
May we move from aimlessness to purpose, from
living for oneself to life for others, from terror of
threatening war to the calm of inviting dialogue.
May a fanatical will not obscure the light of reason.
May uncontrolled moral strength not
overcompensate for the mind's ambiguities.
May sweet pieties not be an exchange for
demanding research.
May self-righteousness not be concealed under a pile

of quotations from sacred books not subjected to cultural and historical criticism.

Yes, it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.

May we become candles that burn from within enlightened and compassionate hearts, and shed the warmth of love to all who are children of the same gracious God.

Amen.

I Pray

Corrine De Winter

I pray today for
Those who are homeless to find shelter.
Those who are depressed to discover joy.
Those who are addicted to find release.
Those who are lonely to find a friend.
Those who are confused or lost to find a path.
Those who are heartbroken to know that it will pass.
Those who are sick to find healing.
Those who live in darkness to be covered in light.
Those who are dying to know that they have lived.
I pray today for peace where there is unrest,
for love to prevail over all.

Father Virgil Cordano, O.F.M., is a former pastor and president of the Franciscan Theological Seminary at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, CA. He has been a priest for sixty years. A book about his life, Padre: The Spiritual Journey of Father Virgil Cordano, *has recently been published by Santa Barbara Capra Press.*

Please see Corrine De Winter's bio on page 27.

BOOK REVIEWS

Please enjoy these publishers' reviews of books that have recently come across our desk.

Meditating With Mandalas: 52 New Mandalas for Growth in Peace and Awareness
by David Fontana
Duncan Baird Publishers, 2005
www.dbponline.co.uk, 415-647-1812

Mandala, Sanskrit for circle, polygon, community, and connection, takes the meditator on a wordless journey into the mind's deepest mysteries.

Meditation is one of the most valuable psychological, spiritual, and physical practices we have for achieving inner peace. Our spiritual well-being depends on our ability to create stillness in our mind at will. Mandala meditation has the advantage of using visual senses as a way of focusing, feeding, and holding attention.

The imaginative and richly symbolic content of the commissioned art in the 52 mandalas takes the meditator on a mental journey of insight into the inner spiritual world. The artwork also releases and stimulates the meditator's own creative abilities by freeing the unconscious.

Each mandala in this book is accompanied by a guided meditation that explores the symbols in the design and helps explain their meanings. With images and patterns that draw the eye to a quiet point, the full-

color art guides us on a voyage of self-discovery.

Dr. David Fontana's many publications include *The Secret Language of Dreams, The Secret Language of Symbols, The Elements of Meditation, The Meditator's Handbook,* and *The Lotus in the City.*

Dr. Fontana is a Ph.D. in psychology, a Chartered Psychologist, and a fellow of the British Psychological Society. He has been a practitioner of meditation for more than 25 years, studying with leading teachers from many countries and traditions. In addition to his university duties, he runs meditation workshops and seminars, and is a frequent broadcaster on the subject.

Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2006
by Jesuit Communications Centre, Ireland
Ave Maria Press, September, 2005
www.avemariapress.com, 800-282-1865

Following the success of the 2005 edition, Ave Maria Press has published *Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2006,* derived from the web site of the Jesuit Communications Centre in Ireland (www.sacredspace.ie). This prayer guide offers readers a way to reflect and pray each day of the liturgical year. Since its inauguration in 1999, the popular interactive web site, www.sacredspace.ie, has logged over fifteen million visits. The site has been translated into twenty languages and people pray on the site at a rate of one every ten seconds.

Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2006 allows readers to quietly connect with God and provides a space to be spiritually nourished, healed, challenged, and transformed. Included are daily scripture selections, points of inspiration, and weekly themes that

encourage reflection on the six stages of prayer.

"We invite you to make a sacred space in your day and spend ten minutes praying here and now, wherever you are, with the help of a prayer guide and scripture chosen specially for each day. . . Remember that God is everywhere, all around us, constantly reaching out to us, even in the most unlikely situations. When we know this, and with a bit of practice, we can pray anywhere." (From the introduction, "how to use this book.")

No Time To Lose:
A Timely Guide to the Way of the Bodhisattva
by Pema Chodron
Shambhala Publications, 2005
www.shambhala.com, 617-424-0030

The 1,200-year-old Buddhist text known as the *Bodhicharyavatara* (or *The Way of the Bodhisattva*) is the ultimate guide to how to live like a bodhisattva – one of those beings who makes the seemingly impossible-to-fulfill vow to end the suffering of all beings. The Dalai Lama said of it: "If I have any understanding of compassion and the practice of the bodhisattva path, it is entirely on the basis of this text that I possess it."

In her new book, *No Time To Lose,* Pema Chodron provides a practical and contemporary commentary on *The Way of the Bodhisattva,* intended to reach a wide audience and be accessible to people who are not familiar with Buddhist teachings. In her introduction she writes:

"This classic text, written by the Indian sage Shantideva, gives surprisingly up-to-date instructions for people like you and me to live sanely and

openheartedly. . . I regard this text as an instruction manual for extending ourselves to others, a guidebook for compassionate action. We can read it to free ourselves from crippling habits and confusion. We can read it to encourage our wisdom and compassion to grow stronger. And we can read it with the motivation to share the benefit with everyone we meet . . .

"Personally, I am indebted to Shantideva for his determination to get this message across: people like you and me *can* transform our lives by awakening the longing of bodhichitta (awakened heart). And I am deeply grateful to him for expressing, unrelentingly, that it is urgent, very urgent, that we do so. We have no time to lose. When I look at the state of the world today, I know his message could not be more timely."

Pema Chodron is an American Buddhist nun in the lineage of Chogyam Trungpa, the renowned Tibetan meditation master. She is resident teacher at Gampo Abbey, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the first Tibetan monastery in North America established for Westerners. She is the author of five books, including the best-selling *When Things Fall Apart* and *The Places That Scare You.*

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